

For Rep. Israel's position and Q&A on the Affordable Health Care for America Act (H.R.3962), [click here](#) .

Taking on the High Price of Prescription Drugs

Affordable health care is increasingly dependent on affordable prescription medicines. Unfortunately, the cost of prescription drugs is increasing at double-digit rates. Rep. Israel believes we should fund research on the effectiveness of cheaper alternatives to heavily marketed drugs. He is also fighting the powerful drug lobby in Washington to permit the re-importation of safe, legal drugs from Canada, where American consumers can pay up to 50 percent less for their prescriptions.

Rep. Israel has also been a leader in ensuring counterfeit prescription drugs are eradicated as a threat to the American consumer. In June 2009, Rep. Israel re-introduced Tim Fagan's Law (H.R. 2726), which expands FDA authority to crack down on counterfeiting and increases criminal penalties for counterfeiters. To hear more about the legislation, [watch Rep. Israel's video blog](#) .

Action in the 111th Congress

The 111th Congress has already taken several actions to help Americans stay healthy. Rep. Israel voted in favor of H.R. 2, the Children's Health Insurance Reauthorization Act. This legislation was signed into law by President Obama and will ensure 11 million children have health care coverage, including 4 million who were previously uninsured.

Rep. Israel also fought to keep \$19 billion for health care information technology (HIT) in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (H.R.1), which was signed into law in February 2009. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the incentive payments in the recovery act will lead to 90 percent of doctors and 70 percent of hospitals using comprehensive health records within the next decade. Recent studies by the Rand Corporation estimated that widespread adoption of HIT, would lead to savings of \$80 billion per year.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act also invests in a COBRA subsidy to help Americans who lose their jobs keep their health care coverage. For more on the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and Health Care, [click here](#) .

Help for Cancer Patients

Rep. Israel co-chairs the House Cancer Caucus. In this leadership role, he has introduced several bills to benefit cancer patients. You can watch Rep. Israel's remarks at a Susan G. Komen Rally for the Cure by [clicking here](#) .

In the 111th Congress, Rep. Israel's bills include the Access to Cancer Clinical Trials Act of 2009 (H.R. 716), which requires health care plans to ensure routine care coverage (doctor's visits, lab work, etc) for patients undergoing a cancer clinical trial. He also reintroduced the

Assuring and Improving Cancer Treatment Education and Cancer Symptom Management Act of 2009 (H.R. 1927), which provides Medicare coverage for a 1 hour educational session for newly-diagnosed cancer patients. This session will help patients and their caregivers understand their disease and the effects of their treatment.

Nassau-Suffolk Medicare Disparity

Rep. Israel is working to lower health care costs for Suffolk County seniors. Although Nassau and Suffolk counties are contiguous, there are significant disparities in premiums paid by Medicare recipients in each county. In 2008, HIP and Medibblue (formerly Empire Blue Cross), two of the most popular Medicare Advantage plans on Long Island, offered plans in Nassau County that charge no additional premium for health and drug coverage. In Suffolk County however, HIP and Medibblue charge \$99.50 and \$69.00 per month, respectively. According to Association of Health Insurance Plans (AHIP), the difference in the monthly reimbursement rate between Nassau and Suffolk Counties is approximately \$54.00.

Insurers in Suffolk County are reimbursed at a rate that is 6% less than insurers providing the same services in Nassau County. This is partially due to the fact that Medicare does not account for health care provided at the Northport Veterans Administration Medical Center (located in Suffolk County) when determining reimbursements, even though it is required by law to take VA services and patients into account. The lower payments mean that Medicare Advantage plans have had to raise premiums dramatically in Suffolk County above what they charge in Nassau County for the same or similar coverage.

Rep. Israel, along with Rep. Tim Bishop, introduced legislation (H.R. 2686) in June 2009 to equalize reimbursements to the higher of two in the case of two contiguous counties when one has a VA Medical Center in its boundaries and the other does not. Reps. Israel and Bishop also introduced this bill in the 110th Congress.